



## Yellowstone Country Bear Hunter's Association

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Joe Kondelis  
President  
Yellowstone Country Bear Hunter's Association  
255 Upland Court  
Cody, WY 82414  
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Chairman Welborn and members of the House Fish, Wildlife and Parks Committee,

We are writing to ask you to oppose House Bill 33. As the only bear hunting advocacy organization in the Northern Rockies, we strongly feel that this bill would be a step backward in the progress we have made in wildlife conservation and decrease opportunity for sportsmen all over Montana.

The bill specifies criteria required of state game and fish agencies when dealing with large predators involved with human and agricultural conflict. The bill would literally define the action the state game and fish must take when dealing with large predators like the mountain lion, black bear and grizzly bear. Our concern is the actions required do not leave leeway for human error such as improper food storage, less than adequate fencing (chicken coops & beehives), humans feeding, and human habituated animals. For instance; if a black bear never before in trouble damages a bee hive that is in a rural area defined to be black bear habitat it will be removed from population without question.

This bill will render our wildlife officials ineffective in being able to successfully manage our bears and cats as a prized game species in Montana. More over the strict guidelines set forth in this bill will not allow for grizzly relocation on most instances. The removal of more grizzly bears from the Montana population will be detrimental to the years of work done to recover the species to levels that will allow for removal from the Endangered Species List and eventual state control of this species.

It is imperative that the State of Montana ensure that it does everything in its power to help in the de-listing process. State managed hunting seasons of grizzly bears will greatly improve the human perception of grizzly bears and the Montana Government. It has been found over and over that in fact the perception of the public is more important to species recovery than policy.

We also feel that it is more important to educate the public on issues of human/predator conflict and the reasons that they occur. House Bill 33 does not create a solution to the problem of predator conflict. This is merely a temporary fix at the expense of our wildlife that will further reduce populations and hunting opportunities for sportsmen. Furthermore it will increase the divide between sportsman and state government.

There are no doubt times when removal is a necessary step in the difficult task of predator management, however it should not be the only step. If in fact it is required or the best course of action we would encourage the utilization of our youth sportsman and disabled hunters to help the State of Montana manage these problem animals. There are youth and disabled individuals all over Montana that would relish the opportunity to hunt bear or cougar. It would be more beneficial for the State to utilize these individuals where appropriate to help facilitate removal. By doing so you increase hunter opportunity, remove target animal, increase public perception and create a working relationship between the state and its sportsman.

We greatly thank you for your consideration in this matter and welcome any questions on our stance you may have.

Thank you for your service to the State of Montana, and sportsmen and women.

Sincerely,

Joe Kondelis  
President  
Yellowstone Country Bear Hunters Association